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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 000377

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SUBJECT: JAMAICA RESPONSE TO LIBERTAD ACT, MAY 2009

REF: A. STATE 48487
 1B. 08 KINGSTON 1042
 1C. 08 KINGSTON 482

Classified By: CDA James T. Heg for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Post has provided responses to questions listed in reftel A. On May 5 during the 2009-2010 National Budget Debate in Parliament, Prime Minister Bruce Golding said, "We continue to advocate for the revocation of the U.S. embargo against Cuba and the normalization of Cuba's relations within the hemisphere. I have every belief that it will happen. But it is a process, not an event, and we must nurture and protect that process, not confront it." Golding has said in other recent speeches that he hopes to see "an end to the isolation of Cuba" (reftels).

¶2. (SBU) There have been no resolutions in the Jamaican parliament condemning human rights abuses in Cuba.

¶3. (SBU) Post is not aware of any other high level diplomatic visits other than PM Golding attending the Third CARICOM/CUBA Summit which began on December 8, 2008 in Cuba and the June 15 trip led by Opposition Leader and People's National Party (PNP) President Portia Simpson Miller for a three-day visit to Cuba (reftels B and C).

¶4. (SBU) The Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett, said during a speech at the Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX) on May 12 that, "Cuba has the potential to become a significant player in global tourism and Jamaica stands to gain from partnership with the Caribbean Island." Bartlett said that within a few weeks, tourism officials in Cuba and Jamaica will sign an MOU for joint designation marketing, with the possibility of joint airlift arrangements.

¶5. (SBU) The Jamaica-Cuba Eye Care Project resumed eye care screening on April 27 and will continue through June 12. The program offers service around the island and claims to have provided eye screening to 10,125 people and provided 573 surgeries, mostly for cataracts.

¶6. (SBU) Post is unaware of any specific Jamaican investments in Cuba or any Jamaican firm with a commercial presence in Cuba. Post is not aware of participation by host country businesses in the Havana Trade Fair. However, Jamaicans generally oppose U.S. policy towards Cuba, which hampers post's efforts to gather accurate investment data.

¶7. (SBU) In regard to bilateral agreements, there are no new items since the framework agreements for bilateral cooperation signed in May 2008 (reftels). There is also a CARICOM-Cuba Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement signed July 5, 2000 (Jamaica is a CARICOM member). Cuba remains a significant export market for Jamaica, with exports of nearly USD 9 million for 2007. Jamaican exports include pig feed, garments, and scrap metal. Imports from Cuba include copper, cement, clay construction materials, and cigars. The GOJ, through the Export-Import Bank, has an established line of credit with Banco Nacional de Cuba in order to facilitate exports.

¶ 8. (C) Although Cuban political involvement in Jamaica was strong at one time, it has now dwindled. Historically, Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) Governments generally have been less sympathetic to the Cuban regime than those of the opposition People's National Party (PNP). The end of Fidel Castro's control of Cuba appears to be leading to closer ties with the Government of Jamaica (GOJ). The Cuban government has continued to provide significant social support through educational scholarships.

¶ 9. (C) Post continues to believe that suspension of the right to bring action in U.S. courts against entities and nationals trafficking in confiscated properties in Cuba is necessary to U.S. interests. Singling out Jamaican entities or nationals for prosecution would be counterproductive in achieving other USG objectives. In Post's view, proceeding with the implementation of Title III of the Libertad Act would seriously complicate, and perhaps even compromise, our efforts in areas of agreement. Actions against Jamaican nationals would likely provoke a strong response from GOJ.

HEG